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	DODE-00	DOEE-00	SRPP-00	DS-00	EB-00	EXIM-01	E-00
	FRB-00	H-01	TEDE-00	INR-00	ITC-01	LAB-01	L-01
	ADS-00	NSAE-00	OMB-01	OPIC-01	PA-00	PM-00	PRS-00
	P-00	SP-00	SSO-00	STR-00	TRSE-00	T-00	FMP-00
	PMB-00	DSCC-00	DRL-02	G-00	FDIC-01	SAS-00	/021W

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FM AMEMBASSY CARACAS
TO SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 2233
INFO AMEMBASSY BOGOTA
AMEMBASSY LIMA
AMEMBASSY LA PAZ
AMEMBASSY QUITO
AMEMBASSY BRASILIA
AMEMBASSY GEORGETOWN
AMEMBASSY PORT OF SPAIN
AMEMBASSY MEXICO
USINT HAVANA
USCINCSO MIAMI FL
CIA WASHDC
NSC WASHDC
USIA WASHDC 1928
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E.O. 12958: DECL: 11/08/08
TAGS: PGOV, PREL, ECON, EFIN; VE
SUBJECT: VENEZUELA'S NOVEMBER 8 REGIONAL ELECTIONS: DEMOCRACY AND
DECENTRALIZATION ARE THE WINNERS

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(D).

REASON: 1.5

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SUMMARY

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF STATE
REVIEW AUTHORITY: OSCAR J OLSON
CLASSIFICATION: UNCLASSIFIED
DATE/CASE ID: 21 JUL 2009 200503654

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1. (C) STRONG TURNOUT, PEACEFUL, PATIENT VOTERS, AND ORGANIZATIONAL GLITCHES CHARACTERIZED THE NOVEMBER 8 REGIONAL ELECTIONS. WITH RESULTS STILL BEING TALLIED, PRELIMINARY PROJECTIONS INDICATE THAT THE DEMOCRATIC ACTION PARTY (AD) HAS HUNG ON TO ITS POSITION AS VENEZUELA'S PRINCIPAL POLITICAL PARTY, BUT IS BEING STRONGLY CHALLENGED BY HUGO CHAVEZ'S FIFTH REPUBLIC MOVEMENT (MVR) AND HIS "POLO PATRIOTICO" ALLIANCE. SEVENTEEN OF 22 SITTING GOVERNORS WERE RE-ELECTED. OF THESE, AD WON EIGHT AND CHAVEZ'S ALLIANCE FIVE. AD APPEARS TO HAVE WON A PLURALITY IN THE SENATE AND THE CHAMBER OF DEPUTIES, BUT BOTH INSTITUTIONS WILL REMAIN POLITICALLY FRAGMENTED AND DIVISIVE. THESE RESULTS PRODUCED JUBILATION IN CHAVEZ'S CAMP, WHICH DECLARED ITSELF THE RISING POLITICAL FORCE IN VENEZUELA, AND SULLEN DISBELIEF WITHIN AD, WHICH HOPED A STRONG SHOWING IN THIS ELECTION WOULD POSITION IT FOR A RUN AT THE PRESIDENCY. WHATEVER THE INTERPRETATION BY THE PARTIES OF SUNDAY'S VOTE, THE UNDERLYING REALITY IS THAT THE STATE ELECTIONS WERE DRIVEN PRIMARILY BY THE PERSONALITIES AND POLITICS OF INDIVIDUAL CANDIDATES, UNDERSCORING THE SUCCESS OF VENEZUELA'S DECENTRALIZATION. THIS HAS SHARPENED THE PRESIDENTIAL PROSPECTS OF

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HENRIQUE SALAS ROMER, WHO IS USING THE ELECTIONS TO PRESENT HIMSELF AS THE ONLY CANDIDATE WHO CAN TAKE ON CHAVEZ. END SUMMARY.

A SUCCESSFUL VOTE

2. (U) SUNDAY'S REGIONAL ELECTIONS WERE CHARACTERIZED BY STRONG TURNOUT AND PEACEFUL, PATIENT VOTERS. ORGANIZATIONAL GLITCHES DELAYED THE SETUP OF MANY VOTING TABLES, CAUSING VOTERS IN SOME PRECINCTS TO WAIT IN LINE FOR SEVERAL HOURS BEFORE THE POLLS OPENED. FURTHER DELAYS INSIDE THE POLLING STATIONS, CAUSED BY A VARIETY OF FACTORS RANGING FROM TEDIOUS IDENTIFICATION PROCEDURES, ON-THE-SPOT VOTER EDUCATION, AND TOO FEW VOTING BOOTHS, CAUSED AN ENORMOUS BACKLOG OF VOTERS BY THE EARLY AFTERNOON. THE NATIONAL ELECTORAL COUNCIL (CNE), CONCERNED ABOUT CROWD REACTION SHOULD POLLS BE CLOSED AT THE ORIGINALLY SCHEDULED TIME OF 4:00 P.M., DECIDED TO KEEP THE VOTING STATIONS OPEN UNTIL THE LAST VOTER HAD VOTED. ALTHOUGH MANY VOTING STATIONS WERE ABLE TO CLOSE UP BY 7:00 P.M., IN SOME PRECINCTS THE VOTING STATIONS STAYED OPEN UNTIL 11:00 P.M.

3. (U) IN SPITE OF THESE DELAYS, WHICH WERE ACCOMPANIED IN SOME AREAS BY HEAT, HUMIDITY, AND/OR RAIN, VOTERS REMAINED CALM, FOCUSED, AND INTENT ON WHAT THEY HAD COME TO DO: VOTE. THE EMBASSY'S 31 OBSERVERS--MAKING US THE LARGEST INTERNATIONAL

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DELEGATION IN COUNTRY--ENCOUNTERED SOME DISQUIET AND UPSET OVER THE LONG WAIT, BUT AT NO POINT DID THIS ERUPT INTO CONFRONTATION OR VIOLENCE. MEMBERS OF OTHER OBSERVER DELEGATIONS ALSO REMARKED ON THE PATIENCE OF THE VOTERS. A COLOMBIAN OBSERVER TOLD US,

"COLOMBIANS WOULD NEVER PUT UP WITH THIS. WE WOULD HAVE BURNED THE

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POLLING STATIONS DOWN AFTER A FEW HOURS."

4. (U) PART OF THE CREDIT FOR THE CIVIL NATURE OF THE VOTE ALSO MUST GO THE VENEZUELAN ARMED FORCES. "PLAN REPUBLICA," THE ARMED FORCES PLAN TO PROVIDE SECURITY AT POLLING STATIONS AND TO MAINTAIN ORDER IN THE COUNTRY DURING THE ELECTIONS, WAS A HUGE SUCCESS. PROFESSIONAL, COURTEOUS WORK AT THE POLLING STATIONS, AND AD HOC ASSISTANCE TO POLLING OFFICIALS TO KEEP VOTERS ORGANIZED AS THEY AWAITED THEIR TURN TO VOTE, WAS NOTED AT ALL OF THE VOTING STATIONS VISITED BY OUR OBSERVERS.

5. (U) THE USE OF U.S.-MANUFACTURED VOTING MACHINES IN APPROXIMATELY 80 PERCENT OF POLLING STATIONS, AN INNOVATION FOR VENEZUELA, HELPED BUILD VOTER CONFIDENCE IN A CLEAN VOTE COUNT, AND ALLOWED THE CNE TO ISSUE A PARTIAL RESULTS BULLETIN SHORTLY AFTER THE LAST POLLING STATION CLOSED. OF THE 7,000 MACHINES DEPLOYED THROUGHOUT COUNTRY, 545 MACHINES (EIGHT PERCENT) WERE NOT USED. OF THESE, 385 WERE PUT OUT OF ACTION BY OPERATOR ERROR. ORIGINALLY, THE REMAINING 160 WERE THOUGHT TO HAVE EXPERIENCED TOTAL MECHANICAL FAILURE. HOWEVER, A SUBSEQUENT EXAMINATION BY THE MANUFACTURER SHOWED THAT ONLY 80 MACHINES, SLIGHTLY MORE THAN ONE PERCENT OF THE TOTAL, SUFFERED MECHANICAL FAILURE.

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FM AMEMBASSY CARACAS
TO SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 2234
INFO AMEMBASSY BOGOTA
AMEMBASSY LIMA
AMEMBASSY LA PAZ
AMEMBASSY QUITO
AMEMBASSY BRASILIA
AMEMBASSY GEORGETOWN
AMEMBASSY PORT OF SPAIN
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USINT HAVANA
USCINCSO MIAMI FL
CIA WASHDC
NSC WASHDC
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THE VOTE RESULTS

6. (U) BECAUSE THE POLLS CLOSED SO LATE, AND THE USE OF MANUAL
VOTE-COUNT IN APPROXIMATELY 20 PERCENT OF THE VOTING STATIONS,
RESULTS ARE STILL PARTIAL, AND PROJECTIONS BASED ON THOSE RESULTS
ARE PRELIMINARY. HOWEVER, THE ELECTORAL LANDSCAPE LOOKS LIKE THIS:

-- AD AND CHAVEZ'S POLO PATRIOTICO ARE BATTLING FOR FIRST PLACE
IN THE STATE HOUSES. THE RESULTS OF THE GUBERNATORIAL ELECTIONS
CAN BE FOUND IN THE APPENDIX TO THIS MESSAGE. AT THIS POINT, AD
HAS WON EIGHT GOVERNORSHIPS, AND POLO PATRIOTICO HAS WON FIVE. TWO
STATES--GUARICO AND VARGAS--ARE TOO CLOSE TO CALL, WITH AD AND POLO
PATRIOTICO CANDIDATES BATTLING EACH OTHER. OF THE FIVE POLO
PATRIOTICO GOVERNORSHIPS, ONLY TWO--BARINAS AND ANZOATEGUI--BELONG
TO CHAVEZ'S FIFTH REPUBLIC MOVEMENT (MVR). THE OTHER THREE--ARAGUA
(A RE-ELECTION), LARA (A RE-ELECTION), AND PORTUGUESA--BELONG TO
THE MOVEMENT TOWARDS SOCIALISM PARTY (MAS). SEVENTEEN OF THE 22
SITTING GOVERNORS WERE RE-ELECTED. (NOTE: THE STATE OF VARGAS,
VENEZUELA'S 23RD STATE, WAS CREATED THIS YEAR. IT THEREFORE HAD NO

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INCUMBENT. END NOTE.) THIS FIGURE UNDERSCORES THAT THE GUBERNATORIAL ELECTIONS WERE MORE ABOUT THE PERSONALITIES AND POLITICS OF THE CANDIDATES THAN ABOUT NATIONAL POLITICS.

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-- AD IS FIGHTING MVR FOR FIRST PLACE IN THE SENATE AND THE CHAMBER OF DEPUTIES. PRELIMINARY RESULTS SEEM TO INDICATE THAT AD WILL EMERGE WITH A PLURALITY IN BOTH HOUSES OF CONGRESS. THIS MEANS THAT CONGRESS WILL CONTINUE TO BE FRAGMENTED AND DIVISIVE. NEVERTHELESS, CHAVEZ HAS ESTABLISHED HIS PARTY, AND HIS POLO PATRIOTICO ALLIANCE, AS THE RISING POLITICAL FORCE IN VENEZUELA, REPLACING COPEI AS AD'S COUNTERPOINT.

-- THE SOCIAL CHRISTIAN PARTY (COPEI) WAS BADLY DAMAGED AS A NATIONAL PARTY. ALTHOUGH IT CLUNG TO FIVE GOVERNORSHIPS--DELTA AMACURO, FALCON, MIRANDA, NUEVA ESPARTA, AND TACHIRA--IT HAS SO FAR WON ONLY TEN PERCENT OF THE SENATE VOTE AND 11 PERCENT OF THE CHAMBER OF DEPUTIES VOTE. IT IS TOO EARLY TO DETERMINE WHAT THIS MEANS IN TERMS OF SEATS IN BOTH HOUSES, BUT COPEI HAS BEEN REDUCED TO THE FOURTH PARTY IN THE LEGISLATURE, A SERIOUS BLOW TO A PARTY WHICH A YEAR AGO WAS CONVINCED THAT IT WOULD WIN THE PRESIDENCY AND BECOME THE PARTY OF GOVERNMENT.

-- SALAS ROMER'S PROYECTO VENEZUELA EMERGED AS THE THIRD LARGEST VOTE GETTER IN THE NATIONAL CONGRESSIONAL ELECTIONS. SO FAR, PROYECTO VENEZUELA HAS WON 12 PERCENT OF THE SENATE AND CHAMBER OF DEPUTIES VOTE. IN THE FEDERAL DISTRICT, PROYECTO VENEZUELA BEAT AD, PUTTING ITSELF IN SECOND PLACE BEHIND POLO PATRIOTICO.

-- PROYECTO VENEZUELA DODGED A BULLET IN CARABOBO, WHERE HENRIQUE SALAS FEO--SON OF PRESIDENTIAL CANDIDATE SALAS ROMER--WAS RE-ELECTED (HIS PROJECTED 55 PERCENT VOTE COUNT WAS COMFORTABLE, BUT LESS THAN HIS FIRST ELECTION). EARLY EXIT POLLS INDICATED THAT SALAS FEO MIGHT BE HEADED FOR DEFEAT, BUT HIS VOTE COUNT CLIMBED LATE IN THE EVENING AND GAVE HIM A COMFORTABLE MARGIN OF VICTORY.

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-- AD'S STUMBLING AND COPEI'S COLLAPSE AT THE NATIONAL LEVEL SHARPEN SALAS ROMER'S PROSPECTS IN THE UPCOMING PRESIDENTIAL ELECTIONS. SALAS ROMER USED LAST NIGHT'S RESULTS TO PROCLAIM HIMSELF THE ONLY CANDIDATE CAPABLE OF STANDING UP TO CHAVEZ.

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THE REAL WINNERS

7. (C) THE REAL WINNERS OF SUNDAYS ELECTIONS WERE VENEZUELAN DEMOCRACY AND DECENTRALIZATION. MOUNTING FEARS THAT THIS WOULD BE A CONTENTIOUS, MEAN-SPIRITED ELECTION DID NOT PLAY OUT. THE PATIENCE AND QUIET DETERMINATION OF VENEZUELAN VOTERS TO CAST THEIR BALLOT LEFT LITTLE ROOM FOR AGITATION OR CONFRONTATION. IN THE IMMEDIATE AFTERMATH OF THE VOTE, THE ONLY REPORTED DEMONSTRATIONS OCCURRED IN MONAGAS STATE, WHERE POLO PATRIOTICO SUPPORTERS HELD A DEMONSTRATION PROTESTING THE RE-ELECTION OF ADECO LUIS EDUARDO MARTINEZ AS GOVERNOR. IF THIS MOOD HOLDS, AND THERE IS NO EVIDENCE TO SUGGEST OTHERWISE, THEN THE SUNDAY ELECTION IS A PROMISING HARBINGER OF THE DECEMBER 6 PRESIDENTIAL ELECTION, AND SUGGESTS THAT VENEZUELAN WILL CHOOSE THE "VIA DEMOCRATICA" TO INSTITUTE THE POLITICAL CHANGES THEY WANT AND EXPECT.

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	P-00	SP-00	SSO-00	STR-00	TRSE-00	T-00	FMP-00
	PMB-00	DSCC-00	DRL-02	G-00	FDIC-01	SAS-00	/021W

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FM AMEMBASSY CARACAS
TO SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 2235
INFO AMEMBASSY BOGOTA
AMEMBASSY LIMA
AMEMBASSY LA PAZ
AMEMBASSY QUITO
AMEMBASSY BRASILIA
AMEMBASSY GEORGETOWN
AMEMBASSY PORT OF SPAIN
AMEMBASSY MEXICO
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APPENDIX

GUBERNATORIAL ELECTIONS

STATE

WINNER

AMAZONAS	JOSE BERNABE GUTIERREZ (AD)
ANZOATEGUI	ALEXIS ROSAS (MVR)
APURE	JOSE GREGORIO MONTILLA (AD)
ARAGUA	DIDALCO BOLIVAR (MAS)
BARINAS	HUGO DE LOS REYES CHAVEZ (MVR)
BOLIVAR	JORGE CARVAJAL (AD)
CARABOBO	HENRIQUE SALAS FEO (PV)
COJEDES	JOSE ALBERTO GALINDEZ (AD)
DELTA AMACURO	EMERI MATA MILLAN (COPEI)
FALCON	JOSE CURIEL RODRIGUEZ (COPEI)
GUARICO	TOO CLOSE TO CALL
LARA	ORLANDO FERNANDEZ (MAS)
MERIDA	WILLIAM DAVILA (AD)
MIRANDA	ENRIQUE MENDOZA (COPEI)
MONAGAS	LUIS EDUARDO MARTINEZ (AD)

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NUEVA ESPARTA	RAFAEL TOVAR (COPEI)
PORTUGUESA	IVAN COLMENARES (MAS)
SUCRE	ELOY GILL EMMANUELLI (AD)
TACHIRA	SERGIO CALDERON (COPEI)
TRUJILLO	LUIS GONZALEZ MILIANI (AD)
VARGAS	TOO CLOSE TO CALL

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YARACUY
ZULIA

EDUARDO LAPI GARCIA (CONV)
FRANCISCO ARIAS CARDENAS (MVR/COPEI)

NOTE: AD: DEMOCRATIC ACTION PARTY
- MVR: FIFTH REPUBLIC MOVEMENT
- COPEI: SOCIAL CHRISTIAN PARTY
- MAS: MOVEMENT TOWARD SOCIALISM
- CONV: CONVERGENCIA
- PV: PROYECTO VENEZUELA

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